

**August 13, 2002**

**UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH INFORMATION LETTER**

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS VOLUNTARY SERVICE (VAVS)  
NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NAC) 2002 RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. This letter transmits recommendations adopted by the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) at its 2002 annual meeting in Portland, Oregon, and provides Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) comments. These comments are based on a nationwide electronic mail survey of Voluntary Service Program Managers.

2. The following 2002 recommendations are stated verbatim as adopted by the VAVS NAC. These recommendations are identified by quotations and each is accompanied by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) comment:

a. **RECOMMENDATION:** "It is recommended that each chief have a minimum of one evening VAVS meeting so that new and younger members can attend to fulfill their duties as representative. We need the younger people so let's make it easier for them to be a representative."

**VA COMMENT:** Approved. A minimum of four VAVS meetings is required by current Veterans Health Administration (VHA) policy. The composition of the local VAVS Committee is changing due to age and declining health of the current local VAVS Committee members. Younger committee members are often employed and unable to attend VAVS meetings held during the day. Local management should be encouraged to hold one evening VAVS Committee meeting to accommodate those members who are employed.

b. **RECOMMENDATION:** "At VAMC's and other VA facilities where VA staff and employees are provided with photo/picture identification [ID], volunteers [without compensation employees] should be furnished the same type of positive ID. This form of ID will not only add to the total security of all VA facilities where volunteers are serving, it will enhance the overall well being of both in [patient] and outpatient veterans, VA staff and all volunteers. Furthermore, in cases where volunteers are serving veterans outside the VA facilities, in the local community and in veterans' homes, the picture ID will give them legitimacy."

**VA COMMENT:** Approved. VA volunteers are considered "without compensation" employees (WOC). Most facilities require picture identification to enter the buildings. If facilities require VA employees and contractors to have VA-issued picture ID's, then VA volunteers should receive them as well.

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c. **RECOMMENDATION:** “There is a need for staff training and preparation for new volunteers at outpatient clinics. Volunteers who go to the clinic should have an opportunity for orientation on the premises as well as a variety of available positions to serve the veterans who visit the clinics.”

**VA COMMENT:** Approved. VA volunteers are considered WOC employees and are required to receive the proper orientation and service-specific training by the utilizing service. If the volunteer is assigned to an outpatient clinic, an orientation must be provided by the staff at the clinic. Staff are encouraged to maximize the utilization of VA volunteers to enhance services provided to veterans.

3. VHA Central Office, Voluntary Service Office (10C2), will distribute a copy of this Information Letter to all current VAVS NAC National Representatives.

S/ Nevin M. Weaver for  
Robert H. Roswell, M.D.  
Under Secretary for Health

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